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Malko Sabha.[1] But even this body which represents more advanced opinion was not in favour of permitting a Santal to transfer by will anything except his self-acquired property; and the President admitted that this change would have little practical effect, since the laws against alienation practically limit the self-acquired property to such land as the raiyat has himself reclaimed."

Considering all these, the committee did not think a change ought to be enforced by legislation and hoped that the customary law would develop 'naturally and gradually.' Finally, they recommended that civil cases involving questions of Santal law of inheritance should, where possible, be referred to arbitration by Santal arbitrators to facilitate the growth of a convention.

Conclusion

We have already seen that the Santals have a well-knit social organization which moulds their thoughts, feelings and actions. So the sentiments produced in the mind of the tribe have a special stamp of their own. The actions inspired by these ideas have a similarity under social discipline and these, in their turn, crystallize into usages, and next,

1. Hõṛ Malto Maraṅ sabha (?)

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into customary laws. The Santal has, in his own way, learned to value the corporate discipline necessary under social life. He has built up his own body of traditions and customs and has appointed proper custodians to look over them, to administer them for the well-being of the tribe on the earth. Nobody expects from the Santal the cultural level we associate with the civilized races in India, but enquirers into their manners and customs must be struck with the correlation of the cultural evolution of the tribe with its material and environmental back-ground, noticed in the previous chapters.

Scholars of Pre-Dravidian life have noticed the communistic aspect of their society. In many instances, this holds true of Santal life. The leadership of the tribe, whether social or socio-religious as exercised by the Headman or the Priest, is exercised with due restraint because of the check imposed by the consultative body known as "Monren hor." Thus Santal tribal judgments have that provision for justice and fair-play which all civilised societies crave. That such democratic ideas permeate the whole tribe will be apparent from the practice of offering gifts to the member in whose house there is festival going on. To a people who are remarkably poor like the Santals, this practice lightens the burden of the house-holder, bound by custom to provide community feasts and drinks, apart from

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105 182 431 being an evidence of fraternal virtues of co-operation.

105 181 421 836 Although ideas of individualism have saturated the Santal social fabric and they now own private property, and have personal ownership over many things, communistic ideas in origin can be easily traced in the custom which allows all bachelors of the tribe to have free access and intercourse with the unmarried girls of the tribe barring of course customary prohibited degrees and relations.

105 593 Evidence of discipline in family life can be easily noticed. Their heads of families are held in great esteem and their commands are carried out [611] respectfully. Although the family is patrilineal and patripotestal, the mother has her natural voice in the family-life and women, notwithstanding all their legal disabilities, have their moral rights assured.

105 181 582 Nowhere is the democratic authority of the appointed guardians of the tribe in better evidence than in the cases of marriage regulations. It is in the administration of these that we can see the will of the Santals finds fullest play. We have seen in the foregoing pages how clan-incest is detested and how the erring ones undergo penance and restored [623] to the tribe. It is the tribal council, the sacred repository of all customs and traditions, that main- [684] tains intact the tribal solidarity and purity by out-casting the man and woman who have become

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mediums of pollution to the tribe and thereby to its security and well-being. The Santal does not take recourse to such social ostracism so much from motives of punishment as from a sense of defence against some external sin visiting the tribe; and by restoring the delinquent to the tribal fold, they want to communicate afresh the "mana" (taboo-holiness) which he was supposed to have lost by his action.

In conclusion we may say that there is a close inter-relation between the material culture, the social organization and the tribal government of the Santals. By taking recourse to various means the Santal has, in his own way, solved the problem of the struggle for existence. This we have seen in detail in the chapter on "Economic Life." Here we have seen how by their tribal polity, they have devised measures as to how to live an orderly life to achieve that security without which life on earth degenerates into the anarchy of the jungle.

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304 that tattoo marks are not merely a body-decoration.
88 They are as much necessary to women, as cicatrization (or sika) to Santal men. Should a woman be
[606] without her tattoo-signs, her mother-in-law will
[775] refuse to accept her as a daughter of the house; and should such a woman die, before she was ceremonially given these marks, *Iòm Raja* (god of death) will take her to be impure and punish her in Hell. That the Santals consider tattooing as a social and religious necessity, and its omission an offence, cannot be contested in view of the wide prevalence of the custom through the length and breadth of the Santal areas.

105 *Conclusion*

In course of the preceding pages, we have noticed the "Rites de passage", the ceremonies and rituals attendant on child-birth, cicatrization of men and tattooing of women. The various formalities with which the new-born babe is ushered into the society have their own meaning. The society, that has an economic background, built up an elaborate clan-life, singularly homogeneous in its totality and component parts. It organised a social constitution for orderly existence and propagation of the species from biological instincts. So, when a new-comer is on the threshold of the tribe, steps are taken to protect him from unknown and supernatural dangers.

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We see that the eldest babe is given a name after its grand-father. The tribal deities and ancestor-spirits are worshipped to bring good-luck to the baby. Members of the tribe offer it their best wishes, and it grows up. When in the twelfth year, by further magico-religious rites like cicatrization with boys and tattooing with girls, they are protected against further dangers at the hands of the malignant powers in their future life ; and thus the Santals keep away from harm the family, the clan and the tribe as a whole from unforeseen calamities.

MARRIAGE

"O, she is the light of the house," exclaimed a Santal with evident pride, when we asked him as to why they married. The Santals are a very realistic tribe, and they have long ago forestalled the drive of some of the modern totalitarian states against bachelors. They cannot simply understand the proposition as to how a man can go on in a state of single blessedness. So both sexes despise the unhappy wretch and do not hesitate to call the solitary thing "a thief, a witch or 'no man'," exactly as E. G. Man observed about seventy years ago.[1] So even today, bachelors and old maids are few and far between in the Santal tribal area, and

1. Ref. E. G. Man, *Sonthalia and the Sonthals.*

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796 785 [K56] Before we conclude, it may be interesting for the reader to have some idea of the original Hook-swinging festival, which has been declared now a criminal act by legislation, because of danger to human lives. Man in his *Sonthalia and the Sonthals*, gives a description which shows how the hooks for suspending the devotee were "inserted in the muscles of his back, who was generally an inebriated oracle. He was then suspended in mid-air and swung round, apparently hanging by the hooks. I have, however, seen a good many of these revolving martyrs, and although to a casual observer it appears very dreadful to behold a man thus pendant, it is not quite so bad so as it seems, for his friends took the precaution to tie a girth of strong cloth round the victim's body, in such a manner that his weight rests upon the cloth rather than on his muscles. The perforation of the flesh may cost him a few drops of blood, but that is all."

796 184 Not being an orthodox Santal festival, *Pata* is observed only by some classes in Mayurbhanj, and does not belong essentially to the tribal calendar.

Conclusion

• 105 In the chapter on Santal economic life, we have seen their annual round of activities and seasonal occupations. Now, an agricultural population alone knows the variety of risks and dangers incidental to

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the turning points, when wind and weather decide the fate of the harvest. These aspects of the material life of the Santal are sought to be guarded by appropriate ceremonials and rituals to the tribal deities, so that the beneficent may protect the harvest, and the malevolent *Boŋgas* may be shorn of their malign influence. These sacrifices and libations to deities and ancestor-spirits are closely associated with all Santal public festivals, when, with community feasts, they ensure their material and spiritual well-being in a co-ordinated and organised ritual.

Various are indeed the risks with which the tribe is threatened. Rain may not fall in season ; there may again be too much of it. Locusts may eat up the corn grown, and as the people look up to these baffling mysteries of existence, they look for confidence, and want to secure good luck for themselves and their tribe. Through these festivals, the Santals want to establish a communion with the super-human powers, by first of all propitiating them with the hope that they, in their benevolence, may influence the destinies of the tribe at such turning points in the material life of the tribe.

All these religious worships attached to the festivals are community worship. While in the midst of such festivals and attendant invocations to deities, the Santal feels elevated out of this ordinary

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day-to-day life into a region of emotions which enables him to establish a sort of a link with the invisible presiding deities of the tribe. So economic factors are linked with social ones, and religion and religious practices are inter-related to strengthen social ties, which the Santal prizes above everything else.